

I. Introduction to Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a 'Trauma Novel'

Disgrace, the Booker Prize winning masterpiece written by the South African Nobel Laureate, J (ohn) M (axwell) Coetzee depicts South Africans' anxieties of trauma in post-apartheid South Africa. Coetzee, hiding behind David Lurie, the protagonist of the novel, propagates distasteful views about South Africa. It stands as a witness to the apparent failure of political change to result in a damaged society's peaceful transformation and reconciliation. The violence done to the people in the form of rape, vandalism and robbery compels readers to ask themselves if apartheid has really ended in South Africa. The issue at base is whether the races in new South Africa can live in harmony with one another or are doomed to replicate the mistakes of the past.

Disgrace, a novel about South Africa after its transition to black-majority rule, focuses on the changing social, political and economic aspects of contemporary South Africa, but centers more in racial tensions between the Whites and the Blacks and gradual shifting of power. *Disgrace*, which is set in the era after legislative end of apartheid, highlights South Africa still remains a racist state. The racial war between the Whites and the Blacks gives a bleak image of apartheid South Africa. More significantly, it depicts the bitter reality of post-apartheid South Africa and states that the legacy of apartheid traumatizes life of South African people.

The main concern of this dissertation is to show how Coetzee in *Disgrace* tries to lessen intensity of South African trauma and rebuild the lost identity of South Africans. Unlike Lucy Valerie Graham who charges that Coetzee "represents as brutally as he can, the white people's perception of the post-apartheid black man", it claims, he also shows black men's fear resulting from lack of social security and the possibility of racial harmony between whites and blacks in democratic South Africa. (435). The traumatized life of South Africans in post-apartheid South Africa is the result of legacy of apartheid which continues to influence South Africans despite historical change brought by the victory of ANC in 1994 which officially dismantled the age of apartheid. South Africa is

described as a country full of social and political conflicts, but the novel is more than just an illustration of chaotic South Africa. The novelist fictionalizes South Africa's current reality, which is mostly bitter and narrativizes traumatic story of South Africans to alleviate their intensity of trauma. Similarly, by showing social and economic progress of the blacks he rebuilds the lost identities of blacks and in the same way he shows optimism towards the racial reconciliation between whites and blacks as newer generation whites have positive attitude towards them. The novelist tries to lessen the intensity of trauma of South Africans by narrativizing their traumatic story and in the same way asserts that there is possibility of forgiveness in new South Africa as newer generation South Africans have better attitude towards each other which can finally establish racial reconciliation between whites and blacks.

J.M. Coetzee, one of the most influential writers of our time, focuses more on the issue of race, racial war and gender violence, difficulties generated by apartheid, human exploitation and abuse of animals. The violent history and politics of his native country, especially apartheid, has provided Coetzee much raw material for his work, but none of his books has been censored by the authorities. One of the prominent writers of South Africa, his writings mostly depict country's social, cultural, economic and political issues. He is more interested to show racial tension, generation war brought by their gap, cultural conflict, abuse of power, political instability in the setting of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Coetzee's works cannot be classified as belonging to any specific postmodernist intellectual current. His works reveal interest in linguistics, generative grammar, stylistics, structuralism, semiotics, and deconstruction. The dilemmas of his novels are based on South African reality, but often presented in a timeless, metafictional form and carrying a plurality of meanings.

Disgrace which is set in post-apartheid South Africa captures how the failed policies of government to uproot apartheid traumatize life of South Africans in various

forms. Gender-based violence has prominent position in Coetzee's novels, and in *Disgrace*, too he offers sharp image of gender violence. The research states that South Africa has the worst known figures for the gender-based violence. In this regard, Helen Moffett, in her research article "These Women, They Force Us to Rape Them: Rape as Narrative of Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa" writes, "South Africa has the worst known figures for gender-based violence for a country not at war. At least one in three South African women will be raped in her lifetime" (129). Rape, a gender-based violence has a special position in *Disgrace*. In the novel, Lucy is raped inhumanely by three black men at her own farm. The incident of rape makes a more forceful representation of post-apartheid South Africa and critics often regard *Disgrace* a kind of rape narrative. Lucy Valerie Graham in her essay "Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" writes, "[. . .] Stifling of a rape narrative is a feature of entire novel" (433). The incident of rape has domineering influence in the novel. Furthermore, the issue that South African women are passive victims of gender based violence becomes much stronger when Lucy demands neither sympathy nor justice for what happened to her, presenting herself as neither a victim nor someone seeking revenge. She refuses to lay a rape charge against the men, explaining it is her private matter because the place is Africa: "The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter; in another place it might be held to be a public matter" (*Disgrace* 112).

Gender-based violence done mostly to the Black and the White women by the Black men in South Africa is due to the Black's inferior attitude to the women and burning racial conflict which continues in post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard, Helen Moffett writes, "[. . .] In post-apartheid, democratic South Africa, sexual violence has become a socially endorsed punitive project for maintaining patriarchal order" (129). She further writes, "Yet narratives about race continue to be rewritten as stories about race, rather than gender" (129). Regarding the issue of race, the most important issue of

South Africa, Alan A Stone writes in *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, “Race is the most important issue in South Africa and in world history as we enter the 21st century. It is most assuredly important to Coetzee; indeed, his novels in a certain sense are a meditation on ‘the white man’s burden’ and the retribution yet to come” (2247).

Coetzee is also more explicitly interested to show the tensions of race in South Africa which is mostly fueled by apartheid. In *Disgrace*, he very significantly shows racial war and never lets us forget the background of post-Apartheid South Africa. He challenges the notions that dismantling of apartheid has assured democratic liberty and the protection of the rights of all citizens. He captures the country’s dirty secret, i.e. violence against rural whites by black hooligans, made worse by the government’s inability or unwillingness to do anything about it. He allegorically criticizes the failed policies of ANC government due to which abuse of power by people has become a common practice.

Abuse of power is another important issue to which Coetzee gives a prominent status in his texts. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee shows how people become immoral by wrong use of their power. In the novel, Lucy and Melanie become victims of abuse of power. The misuse of power guides people away from their responsibility ultimately leading them to their ‘disgrace’ which allegorically is the ‘disgrace of the country’.

In most of his works which have post-apartheid setting, fear or apprehension becomes the major motif. His works show scene of rural crimes which still undergo after the end of apartheid. In *Disgrace*, he narrates how such apprehension gives national trauma to the people which is the outcome of legacy of apartheid. As the form of trauma is more national, it not only occupies White men’s mind but also of Blacks. Petrus, who is black, says, “Everything is dangerous today” which shows black people like him also feel the atmosphere of danger in the country (*Disgrace* 64). *Disgrace* is set at the time

where South Africa is moving towards huge transition after being dominated by apartheid for a long time.

In the novel which is set in the timeline of post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee not only offers social and political complexities of South Africa but also celebrates how South Africa is taking participation in the global change. He shows the development brought by science and technology in various sectors of South Africa. The ideological change he presents in the novel between generations shows new generation people like Lucy have far more positive attitude towards the Black which helps to reduce intensity of hatred and enmity between whites and blacks. Despite picturing significant and positive change taking place in South Africa, he does not escape charges of racism from South African critics, especially the African National Congress due to his interest to reveal dirty secrets of South Africa in his fiction which never comforts readers. He, quite as much as any South African author, has registered for his time and for future generations the brutality, the anger, and the suffering of the apartheid era. Moreover, he relatively paints largely negative picture that is racial conflict which many critics regard may hinder nation building process.

Disgrace is a story of David Lurie, an English Professor in a Cape Town University, who is charged with sexual harassment and forced to resign because of a brief affair with one of his students. He goes to Eastern Cape to his daughter Lucy's farm, where they are assaulted by three African thugs who rape Lucy, slaughter her dogs, loot the house, steal David's car, pour him with methylated spirits, and set him afire. He survives this, and so does Lucy, though the episode leaves her pregnant and too numb to cooperate with an inept police investigation. And even though Petrus, her African neighbor, almost certainly knows of the attack in advance, she does not condemn him. One of the thugs, in fact, is Petrus's brother-in-law, and in one of the last scenes of the novel, when Lurie accuses him of complicity in the attack and reminds him of Lucy's

pregnancy, Petrus amazingly says that since the brother-in-law is too young to marry Lucy, he, Petrus, is willing to take her as his third wife. The extent of Lucy's despair is seen in the fact that though she realizes that Petrus only wants to add her land to his own, she actually agrees to give up title to her land, on condition that Petrus will protect her from the further dangers.

Disgrace is a complex, compact, immensely resonant novel about coming to terms with disgrace, transgression, guilt, and punishment in radically changing times. It alludes to the ways in which white South Africans have to come to terms with their guilt at their complicity in the apartheid regime; at the same time it raises the issue of how black South Africans, in the post-Apartheid world, will deal with their own transgressions.

Disgrace captures complexities of South Africans and especially of the Whites during time transformation after the end of apartheid. Coetzee in the novel shows how during time of political change society moves towards anarchy. It is a straightforward narrative of South African reality in fiction. He has written with a chilling naturalism of a recognizable contemporary South Africa.

Regarding *Disgrace*, various critics have posited their views since its publication in 1999. Derek Attridge, in his research article "Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee's *Disgrace*" is of the opinion that this novel offers to the criticism of ANC government which gives pessimistic picture about certainty of nation building process. He writes, "Nor is it possible to argue that the novel makes no claim to represent or criticize ANC- governed South Africa" (100). He further writes:

After the democratic elections of 1994 and the sweeping ANC victory that brought Nelson Mandela from prison to the presidency, one might well have expected from his pen a novel with at least a tinge of celebration and optimism". There has been expression of annoyance and

anger, especially from South African commentators. The over-riding question for many readers is: does this novel, as one of the most widely disseminated and forceful representations of post-apartheid South Africa, impede the difficult enterprise of rebuilding the country? (99)

He is of the opinion that *Disgrace* is damagingly misleading portrait of society that has made enormous strides in the direction of justice and peace. According to him, the unpleasant picture that Coetzee paints in *Disgrace* may hinder government's challenging task of assimilating different races of people together; especially the Blacks and the Whites. However, he is if of the opinion that in new South Africa "To black as well as white, there are new fears about personal safety" (98).

Controversy has dogged J.M Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* since its publication. *Disgrace* received damning criticism from sections of its South African (and world) readership for its stark portrayal of the rape of a white woman at the hands of three black intruders. Jane Poyner writes in his research article:

Choosing to address the subject of rape, particularly that of a white woman by black men, is deeply troubling for many readers and critics at this moment in South African history, when the incidence of rape, particularly of black women, is endemic and when a traumatized society is still coming to terms with its brutal past in a country where racist stereotypes of the black man as the natural rapist still prevail. In an ANC-commissioned report on racism in the media, the novel has been held up as illustrative of white racism in South Africa today. (12)

Its bleak depiction of the new South Africa was criticized by a member of the African National Congress, leading to debates in the South African parliament. Michiel Heyns, in his research article "Call No Man Happy: Perversity as Narrative Principle in *Disgrace*"

questions its “dispiriting reflection on the new South Africa” and “its practical effect in a political arena” (57).

Similarly, Salman Rushdie suggests in a review of the novel that it “merely become[s] a part of the darkness it describes” (7). *Disgrace* very strongly depicts evils of apartheid South Africa in post-apartheid era. In this regard, Kimberly Wedeven Segall writes in his research paper “Pursuing Ghosts: The Traumatic Sublime in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*”:

Written after the 1994 elections in South Africa, J. M. Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace* offers a dark depiction of South Africa’s transitional tremors, for the legacy of apartheid does not dissipate overnight. Many black South Africans still live in impoverished conditions with high unemployment rates and crime. Set in this post-apartheid setting, *Disgrace* depicts a number of violations. (1)

The essayist is of the opinion that despite historical, social and political transformation brought by the democratic election, South Africans have not experienced complete social and economic change; something unlike apartheid South Africa.

However, there are also large numbers of critics who regard *Disgrace* as an optimistic novel which just mirrors bitter reality of post-apartheid South Africa with white man’s perspective. Pamela Cooper, in “Metamorphosis and Sexuality: Reading the Strange Passion of *Disgrace*” writes:

This essay investigates the processes of change in *Disgrace* as they are articulated through sexuality and related to the sociopolitical shifts underway in post-apartheid South Africa. I argue that sexuality becomes a trope in the novel for wider historical changes: a way of engaging the complex social relations of the ‘new’ South Africa and relating them to the conventional assumptions of the past. (22)

The essayist wants to say that post-apartheid South Africa is going through socio-political change and still the act of violence like sexual violence haunts the country due to legacy of apartheid which time and again shakes the foundation of the country in the form of different sorts of violence. She is of the opinion that amidst legacy of apartheid, new South Africa is also gradually shifting towards change.

Media reports documenting high levels of sexual violence in South Africa increased noticeably in the national press during the late 1990s. Robert L Berner in his review about *Disgrace* writes:

Disgrace is yet another surprise, a straightforward narrative that means just what it says, and its real subject perhaps too grim for fashionable ‘progressive’ opinion in its current state. In the South Africa of which we usually hear these days, the destruction of apartheid has assured democratic liberty and the protection of the rights of all citizens. Only rarely do we hear of the country’s dirty secret: violence against rural whites by black hooligans, made worse by the government’s inability or unwillingness to do anything about it. (228)

The issues which Coetzee raises in *Disgrace* come as a surprise to its readers as it is opposite from what they expected. Coetzee narrativizes the current reality of South Africa in the form of fiction and reveals the dirty secret of violence against rural whites.

Similarly, Maria Lopez analyses *Disgrace* from dual perspective. She says, “*Disgrace* points to the fallacies of post-1994 ‘rainbowism’ by showing that interracial conflict is just one among the many others at work in South African society” (923). She is of the opinion that *Disgrace* not only presents hostility between blacks and whites but also among different social groups. However, she further writes, “In *Disgrace* we encounter acts of friendly visitation and hospitality that, on a more optimistic note, point to the possibility of creating a new community on the land in South Africa” (923).

One of the striking things about *Disgrace* is its focalized unique form of narrativization. Murray Wesson in the *Oxonian* reviews, “The trouble with J.M. Coetzee: An Exchange” writes, “The character through whose eyes *Disgrace* is narrated, is Coetzee, or that Coetzee is hiding behind Lurie to propagate distasteful views about South Africa”(1). What Coetzee does in the novel is narrativization of South African national trauma through the perspective of David Lurie whose thought and perception dominate the text. In this regard, Badri Prasad Acharya, writes:

As David Lurie is the only focalizer, the person from whose perspective the events and characters of the story are witnessed or perceived, everything in the narrative is filtered through his perception in present tense. All the focalizeds are brought into light neither by the author nor by the narrator but by the focalizer. (58)

The novel is written in the third person without narratorial judgment. *Disgrace* has aroused critical reflection on its textual and linguistic qualities, to a greater extent than other Coetzee novels, probably because the narrative is focalized through the consciousness of a character, David Lurie, who constantly explores and ponders the potentialities and constraints of language

The narrative of *Disgrace* is a focalized one where characters are filtered from the perspective of Lurie. Gareth Cornwell, writes in “Realism, Rape and J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”:

The narrative situation of *Disgrace* is conventional: an authorial narrator tells a story that is consistently focalized through the consciousness of the protagonist, David Lurie. The presentational process is de-realized to an extent by Coetzee’s trademark use of the present tense. Readers of *Disgrace* should have no difficulty in accepting the mimetic premises of what seems to be an increasingly conventional practice. (307)

Similarly, Carol Iannone, writes in a commentary about *Disgrace* “*Disgrace* is a gripping read, paced, shaped, and developed in a way that locks us into the narrative, and threaded with recurring images, like that of fire, which slowly build an unbearable climax”(62).

As literature is a mirror of society, Coetzee very realistically mirrors rape, murder, torture, violence which haunts present South Africa as a legacy of apartheid. However, the most striking aspect of the novel is its focalized narrative which reduces the burden of trauma generated by such violence. Coetzee is also brought up in the regime of apartheid. He through the eyes of David Lurie presents his traumatic experience of apartheid era. Regarding about South African novelists Willemijn de Ridder in his thesis paper “A Narrative of Forgiveness: South African *Forgiveness in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee*” writes, “In their books, they (South African novelists) feature traumatized individuals and put their own experiences into words. They also bear witness to the collective trauma of their nation, and as such, their works of art are narrative attempts of coming to terms with the past” (9). Narratives are not just simply telling a story. It is a medium through which lost identities are created. Willemijn de Ridder further writes, “A narrative includes a plot, the perspective of the narrator and the perspective of the actors. In a way, creating a narrative is creating an identity” (16). Narratives are used to rebuild the individual’s shattered sense of identity and give meaning.

In *Disgrace*, such special narrative has played vital role to create identity of the Blacks and the Whites. *Disgrace* is some sort of autobiographical writing because when experience of writer is embedded in the novel it becomes autobiographical writing and autobiographical writing gives some kind of relief from pain and autobiographical writing may be “a tool for healing” (17). Kimberly Wedeven Segall writes:

Because symbolic images expose the anxiety of an individual or a community with regards to a traumatic event, writing is a healing act: it provides relief through a creative outlet. While *Disgrace* obscures and

reconfigures violence without, in the end, completely healing, the traumatic sublime is part of Lurie's gradual development: as the ghostly bodies contrast rationalizing discourses, the novel works out a larger healing dialectic of discursive words and traumatic embodiment. (12)

Through writing, the repressed anxieties come out which functions to give relief through creative outlet of hidden sufferings.

Since the publication, the disturbing nature of *Disgrace* has drawn many critics. Various critics have given their own views about *Disgrace* and most of them regard it as dark and stereotypical representation of new South Africa. The present researcher argues that *Disgrace* not only depicts legacies of apartheid as a cause of trauma of South Africans which has shattered their identities, but also attempts to heal their trauma, builds their identities through its unique narrativization of their traumatic story and claims that there is possibility of forgiveness in post-apartheid South Africa which can finally establish peace and harmony in the country. The hidden trauma of people has been brought out through narration which works as a medium of healing. Avishai Margalit writes in his book *The Ethics of Memory*, "Freud's belief in the healing power wrought by bringing repressed memories to the light of consciousness" (3). He further writes, "Making the traumatic, repressed communal memories open, explicit, and conscious is said to have healing power" (4). Coetzee himself was brought up in the regime of apartheid and he through the perspective of David Lurie narrativizes his hidden trauma. As the form of narrativization is allegorical, it becomes more than personal and it is a narrativization of South African national trauma. Furthermore, the researcher also asserts that, the novel is not merely pessimistic but on the contrary the novelist ends it very cleverly in an optimistic tone.

The term 'trauma novel' refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. A defining feature of the trauma novel is

the transformation of the self ignited by an external, often terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and the world. To most English-speaking people the ‘word’ trauma is no stranger, especially if one happens to live in a country riddled with random, unpredictable instances of violent criminal activity. It is probably safe to say that in common parlance the term is associated with something which disrupts one’s life so severely that it is difficult, if not impossible, to ‘pull oneself together’ any time soon after the traumatic, traumatizing event, such as a car hijacking, a robbery or mugging, an assault, a rape and so on. *Disgrace* holds these features in core and it can be termed as a ‘trauma novel’. The present researcher will analyze *Disgrace* in the framework of Cultural Trauma Studies.

Disgrace highlights how the legacy of apartheid is generating different forms of violence in post-apartheid South Africa and traumatizing the life of the people. One of the striking aspects of the novel is the protagonists in *Disgrace*, Lurie and Lucy who have been traumatized, make effort to ‘work through’ their traumas and come out from their traumatic state to see possibilities in the present and the future. The present researcher applies the theoretical framework of trauma theorist like Jeffrey C. Alexander, Dominick LaCapra, Neil J. Smelser, Jenny Edkins, etc to describe traumatic experience of the protagonists and their ‘working through’ of trauma. Similarly, the novel also gives significance to the attitude of ‘ethical responsibility’ and ‘total forgiveness’ which has been followed by the protagonists. The researcher uses the theoretical tool of Jacques Derrida, Avishai Margalit and Emmanuel Levinas to draw upon protagonists ‘ethical acts’.

II. Narrativization of Trauma in Coetzee's *Disgrace*

Apartheid as Historio-Cultural/National Trauma in *Disgrace*

Apartheid was a system of legal [racial segregation](#) enforced by the [Nationalist Party](#) government of South Africa between 1948 and 1990, under which the rights of the majority 'non-white' inhabitants of South Africa were curtailed and [minority rule](#) by '[white](#)' people was maintained. Apartheid is characterized by its central policy of 'divide and rule', which was aimed at ensuring white survival and hegemony by dividing the non-white population along racial and even ethnic lines. Apartheid as an official policy was introduced following the [general election of 1948](#). Racial segregation in South Africa, which began in colonial times also continued during the regime of apartheid government that segregated [education](#), medical care, beaches, and other public services, and provided black people with services inferior to those of white people. Apartheid sparked significant [internal resistance](#) and violence as well as a long [trade embargo](#)

against South Africa. As unrest spread and became more violent, state organizations responded with increasing repression and state-sponsored violence. Reforms to apartheid in the 1980s failed to quell the mounting opposition, and in 1990 President [F\(rederik\) W\(illem\) de Klerk](#) began [negotiations to end apartheid](#), culminating in multi-racial democratic election in 1994, which was won by the [African National Congress](#) under [Nelson Mandela](#). The democratic election of 1994 marked the official end to the era of apartheid but still the vestiges of apartheid still shape South African politics.

The democratic election also could not successfully dismantle the roots of apartheid and its legacies that dominate post-apartheid South Africa. The legacy of apartheid has generated various sorts of violence and especially racial and gender based violence. Murray Leibbrandt, Ingrid Woolard and Christopher Woolard write in their research book *Poverty and Inequality Dynamics in South Africa: Post-apartheid Developments in the Light of the Long-Run Legacy*, “Although formal policies of spatial separation by race are long gone, a lingering legacy remains in the contemporary prominence: the rural-urban marker of inequality and poverty”(1). The researchers say that legacy of apartheid leaves new South Africa with unequal property distribution, race and class conflict and poverty. South Africa has not reached the post-apartheid era, but it is moving in a somewhat unpredictable manner to the point where apartheid can be declared dead even if not buried.

The legacies of apartheid leave new South Africans with racial war, gender based violence in the form of rape, vandalism, poverty, lack of security and such ongoing evil practices traumatize lives of South Africans. Since the era of post-apartheid South Africa, various writers especially South Africans have tried to capture the trauma of South African people in their fictions. Among such South African writers J.M. Coetzee is the prominent one who received Booker Prize for his novel *Disgrace*, set in a post-apartheid South Africa which very strongly argues that legacy of apartheid has not left new South

Africa. Though apartheid era is over politically, the aftermath or “hangover from the past” is being enacted in one way or another in post-apartheid era (*Disgrace* 40). Despite huge political transition of dismantling apartheid takes place in South Africa, the country still has not come out from the aftermath of apartheid which dominated South Africa nearly for more than forty years.

Disgrace written during South Africa’s transition to black-majority rule, depicts the suffering of the apartheid era that continues in post-apartheid South African society which has made enormous strides in the direction of justice and peace. It captures the dirt of apartheid which now becomes country’s dirty secrets after end of apartheid. “It happens every day,” Lurie says of the assault, “in every quarter of the country,” (98) and his white neighbor adds that “the police are not going to save you, not any more” (100).

In the present-day Republic of South Africa, where period of transition is still going on such forms of violence are more prone to happen. Brian-Vincent Ikejiaku writes in his research paper, “There is a high propensity that crime increases during periods of political transition, coupled with instability and violence [. . .]” (2). Coetzee’s *Disgrace* is set in post-Apartheid South Africa where the lives of the central characters are conditioned by the historical divide between colonizing and colonized people. The difficult process of dismantling the colonial regime is directly implicated in many of the events that befall them. It is unquestionably a novel about the painful transition to a new South Africa, but not only that.

South Africa still suffers from various forms of violence like rape, robbery, vandalism, insecurity, and more importantly gender based violence. In this regard, Helen Moffett writes in “These Women, They Force Us to Rape Them: Rape as Narrative of Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, “Sexual violence in particular has spiralled, with survey after survey suggesting that South Africa has higher levels of rape of women and children than anywhere else in the globe not at war or embroiled in civil conflict”

(129). She further writes, “Africans need to attribute male sexual violence to a legacy of apartheid repression” (140). She asserts that post-apartheid South Africa has not become totally free from the effects of apartheid. The legacy of apartheid which is present in post apartheid South Africa traumatizes life of South Africans.

In the novel, Coetzee, an Afrikaner by birth who writes in English, portrays the new, post-apartheid South Africa as a society in chaos, ruled by black mob violence, with an infrastructure ill-equipped to deal with the social and political turmoil that followed the shift of power in 1994. The society amidst chaos has created trauma in the lives of South Africans affecting both whites and blacks. As the form of trauma is broader and shared by many it takes the form of ‘cultural’ or ‘national trauma’. *Disgrace* investigates the collective trauma of apartheid and its aftermath through the personal and psychological traumas of characters.

Trauma refers to a person’s emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of individual’s sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society. Etymologically, the term ‘trauma’ is derived from Greek medical term denoting a mental condition caused by a severe shock, especially when harmful effects last for a long time. *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* defines ‘trauma’ as “emotional shock following a stressful event, something leading to long term neurosis which is extremely horrible and cause us to feel upset and anxious, often making him/her unable to act mentally” (885).

Jeffrey C. Alexander in his essay “Toward a theory of Cultural Trauma” writes, “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways”(1). In *Disgrace*, David Lurie and his daughter Lucy are attacked in Eastern Cape at his daughter Lucy’s farm, by three black African rapists, who rape Lucy, slaughter her

dogs, loot the house, steal David's car, drench him with methylated spirits, and set him afire. However, both survive this, though the event makes her pregnant and occupies their mind with severe shock and trauma. This traumatic incident creates trauma in their life.

Traumatic events become more serious and affective because of their nature of abrupt presence. Such events which come unexpectedly denying the victim for any preparation to cope with become more traumatic. Alexander writes, "[. . .] [P]eople have spoken continually about being traumatized by an experience, by an event, by an act of violence or harassment, or even simply, by an abrupt and unexpected [. . .]" (2). The rape incident in a novel appears abruptly without any warnings denying Lucy and David from any necessary preparations: "So it has come, the day of testing. Without warning, without fanfare, it is here, and he is in the middle of it" (*Disgrace* 94). The abrupt attack on David and Lucy makes it more violent which shatters their sense of well-being.

Trauma occurs when love, order, peace and security of an individual is shattered. When traumatizing event interacts with human nature that happens to shatter love and order of his/her life then his life becomes traumatic. In this regard, Alexander writes:

[. . .] The trauma experience occurs when the traumatizing event interacts with human nature. Human beings need security, order, love and connection. If something happens that sharply undermines these needs, it hardly seems surprising according to lay theory that people will be traumatized as a result. (3)

David Lurie's and Lucy's lives become traumatic because of the assault to them by three black African "thugs" who destroy love and order of victims' life (*Disgrace* 138). The aftermath of attack leaves them occupied with shock and "no words behind them only fear" (96).

In *Disgrace*, the novelist shows how South Africans are occupied by fear that at any time they can be the victim of any forms of violence. Lurie, after the assault, says:

It [assault] happens every day, every hour, every minute, he [David] tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy. (98)

The above lines meditate on the notion of fear of South Africans that they can be the victims of attack at any time because the case of assault, looting, kidnapping occurs every day, every hour and every minute. Public have no hope on security forces like police which are supposed to defend them from the attacks of hooligans. After assault, Ettinger, a common man, neighbor of Lucy goes to her house and suggests not to rely on police authority for protection. He advises them, “The best is, you save yourself, because police are not going to save you, not any more, you can be sure” (100). The optimism of people that their newly elected democratic government will ensure their life and liberty is weak and the novel reflects new South Africa no better than apartheid South Africa.

The word ‘trauma’ is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Cathy Caruth, a prominent trauma theorist writes in her general definition about trauma, “[. . .] Trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully gasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena”(10). In *Disgrace*, Lurie as a father cannot tolerate the intensity of the pain he got when his daughter, Lucy was raped. He knows, “Lucy is not improving. She stays up all night, claiming she cannot sleep; then in the afternoons he finds her asleep on the sofa, her thumb in her mouth like a child. She has lost interest in food” (*Disgrace* 121). He continuously worries regarding about the safety of his daughter who has been physically and mentally shattered due to the unforgettable incident. Due to his anxieties “[h]e has

nightmares of his own in which he wallows in a bed of blood, or, panting, shouting soundlessly, runs from the man with the face like a hawk, like a Benin mask, like Thoth (121). His “nightmares” (120) and “the ghost of himself” which often come in his dream traumatize him (160). Cathy Caruth, writes in her essay “Trauma: Exploration in Memory”, “To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (2-3). Lucy and Lurie are controlled by the aftermath of the rape and assault which traumatizes them and shatters their sense of well being.

Disgrace captures the traumatic experience of Lurie due to violence which is the outcome of legacy of apartheid. *Disgrace* depicts what Kimberly Wedeven Segall writes: “It reconfigures Lurie’s traumatic experience by deploying what I call the traumatic sublime” (3). Lucy Valerie Graham writes in “Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”, “Media reports documenting high levels of sexual violence in South Africa increased noticeably in the national press during the late 1990s”(3). The increasing high level of sexual violence in new South Africa occupies mind of South Africans with fear.

Disgrace, by presenting trauma especially of the main protagonists, represents the ‘national’ or ‘cultural trauma’ of a country. The individual trauma of mere characters allegorically represents the collective trauma of whole South Africans because it is shared by the South African community. Kai Erikson, whose theoretical innovation was to conceptualize the difference between collective and individual trauma defines them in the following ways:

By individual trauma I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of

communality. (qtd. in Alexander 4)

The trauma of South Africans in *Disgrace* is more collective though at the surface it looks personal trauma of Lurie and Lucy. Before the assault David remarks, “Petrus seems a good man” (*Disgrace* 64). They had helped each other in each others’ work and they had a good relationship. But after the incident of rape on Lucy, Petrus changed his attitude towards David and he left David and Lucy alone to suffer their misery. Now Petrus does not like David to stay in his village so he says to David, “You go away, you come back again – Why?” (201). The violence in the novel, breaks the bonds attaching people together and destroys the prevailing sense of communality which generates collective trauma.

The transition of power to a democratic, elected, non-racial government, which set in motion in early 1990, stirred a debate to free its people from the hangover of apartheid but as it becomes unsuccessful to ensure peace and prosperity of the citizen, the aftermath of apartheid, in the form of legacies traumatize life of South Africans in post-apartheid era. Brian-Vincent Ikejiaku writes:

South Africa, particularly during the long decades of the apartheid regime suffered from many of the problems, and ‘even now’, if to a lesser degree, South Africa suffered so many socioeconomic problems, such as poverty and inequality, corruption, conflict and particularly a high level of crime that continues to traumatize South Africa, even today. (1)

The researcher is of the opinion that the legacy of apartheid generates socioeconomic problems like ‘poverty’, ‘inequality’, ‘corruption’ and ‘crime’ still traumatize South African as policy and projects of democratic government to uproot apartheid successfully did not work. This issue, a post-apartheid collective or national or cultural trauma has been raised by Coetzee in his novel *Disgrace* and the cause for the trauma is legacy of apartheid.

After democratic election of 1994, various South African writers have depicted collective or national trauma in their fiction. Dr. C. Van den Berg, in his paper “Collective Trauma in Modern Afrikaans Fiction” writes, “[. . .] Collective trauma has been and still is represented in modern Afrikaans literature, especially in recent times” (1). The purpose of such writing is to reveal through fiction how South Africans face legacy of trauma in their day to day life. He further writes, “South Africa is still experiencing a post-apartheid trauma” (5).

Legacies of apartheid are the remaining evils of apartheid like rape, vandalism, robbery, insecurity which dominate new South Africa. Coetzee also shows in his fiction how the evils of apartheid generate cultural trauma in the life of South Africans. Neil J. Smelser writes in his essay “Psychological and Cultural Trauma”, “[. . .] Cultural traumas are for the most part historically made, not born” (37). The historical infamous event, apartheid, which plagued South African society with different kinds of social problems brought cultural trauma in South African society.

Disgrace is a complex, compact, immensely resonant novel about coming to terms with disgrace, shame, transgression, guilt and punishment in radically changing times. *Disgrace* presents the collective trauma of the protagonists in the form of shame, a scar which cannot be easily erased. Regarding about this, Sue Kossew writes, “*Disgrace* is a complex exploration of the collision between private and public worlds; intellect and body; desire and love; and public disgrace or shame and the idea of individual grace or salvation” (1). After the attack on Lucy and Lurie, Lucy asks her father and Petrus to go to the market, Lurie thinks he knows the reason: “She would rather hide her face, and he knows why. Because of the disgrace. Because of the shame” (*Disgrace* 115). In this context, Pamela Cooper states that “The idea of disgrace elaborated in the novel involves desire, sex, transgression, and shame-their expressions and representations-in counterpoint with capricious historical forces” (22). The shame here is not a personal

shame of her; actually it is a national shame which has come from evils of apartheid.

Various critics call apartheid as a national shame and thing which is strong enough to become a national shame, functions as a collective or national trauma. Neil J. Smelser writes:

We should say more precisely that in the case of a collective trauma, there is often an interest in representing the trauma as indelible (a national shame, a permanent scar, etc), and if this representation successfully established, the memory does in fact take on the characteristics of indelibility and unshakeability. (42)

According to Smelser, thing or events which take the status of national shame can function as collective or cultural trauma. The memory which is associated with strong negative aspect, usually disgust, shame or guilt gives cultural traumas and they are for the most part “historically made, not born” (37).

Coetzee, by describing black attack on whites shows how power shifts to the majority blacks from minority whites. The role-reversal situation of post-apartheid South Africa has generated different kinds of social problems which are the outcome of legacy of apartheid which can be said as legacy of colonization. Though he has been strongly accused for misrepresentation of Blacks in newly democratic South Africa, *Disgrace* is depiction of current affairs in the form of fiction. Jason Cowley writes *Disgrace* is “a parable of the new South Africa, it is written in prose stripped of all superfluous ornamentation and offers a portrait of a society terminally wounded by the sins of the past and of the present”(18). The scar of the wound of apartheid is among South Africans in the present time too and it frequently traumatizes their lives. Coetzee shows the political and collective shame of apartheid South Africa into the individual sexual shame of a disgraced white professor in the post-apartheid society.

Construction of Community in *Disgrace*

J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, a South African fiction, firmly depicts how the construction of community in terms of race by blacks and whites becomes a medium of violence in democratic South African society. The construction of the community in the foundation of race makes it prone to racial war generated from the feelings of 'us' and 'them' where the majority of the black populations oppose limited whites as 'other'. Blacks like Petrus, Pollux are constructing their community by 'othering' white people of the locality, whereas whites like Lurie and Ettinger are also constructing their community to defend them from threats of blacks. The black people, avoiding democratic principles, allow people of their race only to become members of their community, whereas unwelcomed whites like David Lurie, his daughter Lucy, their neighbor Ettinger are rejected. The racial construction of community in new South African society shakes peace and order of a society, and fuels society with various forms of violence.

Disgrace, set in South Africa during the time of composition, marks the timeline where struggle against the racist state is finally over as apartheid has become discredited policy of the past and democratic government has been established. However, the novel captures the failure of newly elected democratic government to ensure rights and liberty of people which affects nation building process after the end of apartheid. As government cannot assimilate people of various races in new South Africa, people are building their own community where one, especially black is 'othering' whites. As a result there is racial war like situation, due to which characters like Lurie mediate on the fear generated from legacies of apartheid, "I have just travelled up from Cape Town. There are times when I feel anxious about my daughter all alone here. It is very isolated" (*Disgrace* 64).

Here, Lurie, who is white, expresses his fear and anxieties regarding the safety of his daughter, Lucy, who is staying in Grahams town, in her farm, alone. He knows she is staying on her own in a black community, which is ruled by mob and violence and this

can bring any misfortune to her as there is no one to provide security even the police because “the police are not going to save you” (100).

Community is understood as a group of interacting people, possibly living in close proximity, and often refers to a group that shares some common values, and is attributed with cohesion within a shared geographical location, generally in social units larger than household. Community stands as a means for protection and security of people, and for this reason *Disgrace* especially shows its importance in the context of new South Africa where communal war and one community’s ‘othering’ the other community becomes a major problem for the government to lead country towards prosperity. Gyanendra Pandey writes in his essay, “Construction of Community”, community is reconstructed “[. . .] to maintain individual silence, to leave the pain of events like Partition [. . .]” (175). But, unlike to leave the pain of the past, that is pain from the evils of apartheid, in *Disgrace*, community is constructed by blacks, especially for property ownership, power, racial supremacy and control over the whites. It shows the democratic election of 1994 and the victory of the Democratic Party marked the transgression of power from the oppressor to the oppressed and brought the situation of role reversal.

During the time of apartheid, the minimal white population, who were the ‘ruling classes, ruled inhumanly the vast black population and the blacks were always seen as ‘other’. The segregation policy of apartheid segregated blacks in terms of education, health, ownership of property and many others as blacks were nothing more than ‘other’ to whites which is a common thing to happen during colonial times. Gyanendra Pandey writes, in “The Prose of Otherness” “British Colonialism in India regularly represented the ‘native’ as the primitive ‘other’ [. . .]” (195). ‘Othering’ is one of the strategies of whites to have their domination over blacks. In this regard, Justin Brewer writes:

One of the most accomplished tactics employed by whites for the justification of white elitism and domination is defined most often by historians as the ‘othering’ theory. This theory, is one in which a dominant culture draws upon specific differences in cultural norms as justification for self defined superiority. (2)

During the regime of apartheid, a form of colonialism, an ‘othering’ trend – and the violence by which the trend too often is accompanied – is traced to their colonial origins, and the trend has been passed forward from a colonial to a postcolonial era. Now, in new South Africa in post-apartheid period, the role reversal situation has emerged, and power, now shifts to blacks, who suffered long adversities during apartheid. The ‘othering’ continues in post apartheid period, and the blacks, who were othered during the rule of apartheid, are ‘othering’ whites in the post-apartheid period.

‘Othering’ is a racist tendency which views other people as ‘other’ rather than ‘self’ and therefore the feelings of ‘other’ or the excluded ones do not matter at all. In this context, Susan J. Stabile writes:

Othering does not depend on forming particular judgments about the characteristics of a particular group, or drawing conclusions about a particular person based on characteristics of the group of which he is a part, rather, the judgment is more broadly a judgment that the other in question is ‘not me’. (13)

In *Disgrace*, blacks judge whites placing their judgments in the foundation of the principle which regards whites as a different group, alien and who do not belong to them. They with their racist attitude observe whites as something ‘not us’, as someone who “lives among us”, but “is not one of us” and therefore whites are alienated from their community (*Disgrace* 15).

Apartheid, 'a history of wrong', gave blacks, only suffering, and gave them subordinating status and in the contrary, whites had strong dominance over them but it strengthened the feeling of 'us' and 'them' among blacks. Gyanendra Pandey writes, "[. . .] what constitutes the community, the subject of history 'us' and 'them'" (175). In *Disgrace*, the construction of community relies on the foundation of 'us' among the blacks who now exclude whites defining them as 'other' and due to this whites like Lurie and Lucy become victim of apartheid which is "[a] history of wrong" (*Disgrace* 156). As society and its people advocate racism, the minority of the white population often become victim of racial war. David Lurie says to Petrus after the assault:

"Do you know, Petrus," he says, "I find it hard to believe the men who came here were strangers. I find it hard to believe they arrived out of nowhere, and did what they did, and disappeared afterwards like ghosts. And I find it hard to believe that the reason they picked on us was simply that we were the first white folk they met that day. What do you think? Am I wrong?" (118)

In the above lines, Lurie opines that he and his daughter become the tragic sufferers of violence because they are not the part of black community. The reason they were picked by the three black thugs were simply because they were white South Africans.

J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, which won the Booker Prize in 1999, can be read as a political text, a post-apartheid work that deals with the difficulties confronting the white community in South Africa and with some of the choices available to them. Even the well settled whites like Lucy time and again meet threats which shatter her sense of communality. After the incident of rape, she says to Lurie, "They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves" (158). Lurie too finds the community where they are living is not supporting in the time of need.

Hence, the society becomes alien, “Despite the time he has spent here, it feels like a foreign land” (197).

South Africa is in the transitional phase and in this phase South Africans are having conflict of ideas, whereas country is moving in the process of reformation.

Regarding the process of construction of community, Pandey writes:

[. . .] In part to reconstitute community – to rethink the ‘us’ of the story in the fragile moment when a new idea of community collides with the breakdown of earlier sense. Statements of revenge are already statements of defensiveness; and the idea of revenge depends on that of betrayal- and sense of community. (197)

As stated by Pandey, South Africans especially blacks in the process of construction of community, gave importance to ‘us’ and excluded whites as ‘them’ for the betrayal they got from whites during the regime of apartheid. That betrayal now builds an attitude of revenge which functions like a boomerang to the white people. In new South Africa, South African people, especially whites have become victims of racial violence.

The construction of community does not strengthen the sense of ‘we’ and ‘us’ and as a consequence it does not compliment in the process of nation building. As it is not all inclusive, white South Africans like Lurie and Ettinger feel alienated because community is not there to protect them in the time of crisis and for this reason “They ought to install bars, security gates, a perimeter fence” and “turn the farmhouse into a fortress” (*Disgrace* 113). The society where they live does not welcome them and this creates trauma in their life.

Research reports say about increasing number of violence in post-apartheid South Africa. The growing sense of construction of community in post-apartheid era is one of the major factors for them. Pandey writes, “Violence happens – and can only happen –at the boundaries of community” (188). In the novel, Coetzee shows how Petrus threatens

Lurie to leave his village, “You go away, you come back again - why?” (*Disgrace* 201). Similarly, he has been subjected to a frequent attack and does not get support at a time of need. According to Pandey, “[. . .] local attacks, killings, abductions and banishment, events that seriously threatened or destroyed particular sense of community” (189). Lurie lacks love, order peace, prosperity in new South Africa where he and his daughter are left alone to suffer which gives trauma in their lives. According to Kai Erikson, “Trauma is a form of shock all the same a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support [. . .]” (154).

Disgrace shows how white people like Lucy are striving to settle in new South Africa. The community where she lives has minimal white population and Lucy has been learning black people’s way of life “to adjust to the pace of country life” (*Disgrace* 76). She is accustomed to her country life and wants her father David to “[w]ake up”, because “This is the country. This is Africa” (124). They go with lots of adversities in their life, because they settle in that community which does not belong to them and support them. Petrus once invites them in his party and in the party realizing that “they are the only whites”, they feel awkward and furthermore the sense of lack of communality becomes stronger when Petrus “[. . .] does not play the eager host, does not offer them a drink [. . .]” in the party (128-29). Though much alienated humiliated or suffered Lucy desires to stay “in darkest Africa” (95) and she knows “she isn’t safe, she would be mad to feel safe. But she will stay on nevertheless. It has become a point of honour with her”(187).

Lucy stays in that community where majority of the population are Blacks and her close neighbor is Petrus, a peasant, who is “[a] plotter and a schemer and no doubt a liar too” (117). He represents a common peasant, “[l]ike peasants everywhere” who does an “[h]onest toil and honest cunning” (117). He is eyeing on the land of Lucy and is on a way to become a prosperous farmer because he does not want to be “any more the dog-man” (129). Petrus is busy establishing his ‘own land’ and he knows that he can take

benefits from helpless people like Lucy and Etinger who are whites. He “[Petrus] has a vision of the future in which people like Lucy have no place. But that need not make an enemy of Petrus. Country life has always been a matter of neighbours scheming against each other, wishing on each other pests, poor crops, financial ruin, yet in a crisis ready to lend a hand” (118).

Petrus takes advantage of Lucy but after the arrival of Lurie in the farm he doubts he would “take over Lucy’s land” (89) and to achieve his objectives he plots “the scene of the crime” (117). The main purpose of the scene is to torment Lurie with strong communal war so that he would leave the farm and in doing so Lucy just becomes the victim of the problematic attitude of Lurie. Petrus wants Lurie to realize that the community where Lurie is trying to adjust does not welcome him and Petrus knows: “I must tell him to go away [. . .]” and finally he says, “You go away, you come back again - why?” (201). Lurie directly faces the humiliation, the sense that he can never be that part of that community says to himself “I am going to find a room for myself in town” (209). As said by Avishai Marglit, “The effects of insult and humiliation last longer than mere physical pain”, Lurie cannot tolerate the intensity of humiliation and makes up a mind to leave the farm of his daughter to be away from the territory of unwelcoming community (117).

Due to the biased way of construction of community which regards whites as ‘other’, whites like Lucy on the other hand cannot even speak for justice. After the rape and despite Lurie’s strong persistent to report the incident to the police authority she remains quite. She says to her father:

‘David. You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. I will tell you, as long as you agree not to raise the subject again.

The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to

be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone. 'This place being South Africa.' (112)

Lucy hesitates to report to the police authority about the incident because of the unwelcoming and unsupporting attitude of her community members who at the time of crisis leave her to suffer alone.

Disgrace shows what happens to people when community is not there to defend and support people at the time of crisis. Jenny Edkins writes in her essay "Introduction: Trauma, Violence and Political Community":

What we call trauma takes place when the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security, become our tormentors. When the community of which we consider ourselves members turns against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger (4).

Lucy hires Petrus in a hope that he will be ready to help her and defend her from threats and assaults done mainly by the black hooligans and she believes Petrus "will protect her" (*Disgrace* 139). Not only Lucy, Bev Shaw also thinks "[a]s long as Petrus is there, surely she will be all right" (210). But when Lucy and Lurie are attacked by the African thugs at Lucy's farm Lucy calls "Petrus! But there is no sign of Petrus" (92). Similarly, Lurie also shouts, "Petrus! As loudly as he can" but Petrus does not appear to help them in that moment of crisis (93). This indifference of Petrus brings misfortune in the life of Lurie and Lucy who fell being alienated from their community members. Lurie realizes that there is involvement of Petrus in the assault and knows "Petrus is not an innocent party, Petrus is with them" (133).

The community in *Disgrace* is fueled by mob and anarchy and even police authority is not protecting public from violence and "the police are not going to find" the hooligans who break peace and order of the society (119). Such vicious acts of the

community members, their lack of feelings for the other and incapability of security force to ensure environment of peace, order and security in the community make the lives of the sufferers traumatic.

Disgrace shows how blacks threaten whites and the evil they do in order to seize the property of whites. Blacks have remained poor for a long time and due to unequal distribution of land whites own more lands than blacks. Blacks now play an evil game to own the property of whites because they are large in numbers and they do not possess the things possessed by whites and because of this there is:

A risk to own anything: a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes. Not enough to go around, not enough cars, shoes, cigarettes. Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is how one must see life in this country. (98)

Lurie's references to the descriptions of the black South African community, especially of Petrus and his kin with the phrase 'too many' refers to human communities. Lurie repeatedly uses this phrase to ruminate on too many unwanted people, too many cultural groups attempting to live together; too many black South Africans who have economic need. Lurie's actions are largely limited and they do not interact with the black community. While Lurie does not become completely accountable to any social community, he is shown as haunted by the past; it is a troubling embodiment that refuses his seductive self-rationalization.

Coetzee's *Disgrace* reflects on recent events unfolding within South African society. *Disgrace* illuminates two of the key concerns of Coetzee's work: the historical motivations behind colonialism and its legacies in the post-colonial era. For Coetzee post-apartheid does not signal the formal disintegration of empire, but rather a new, and in many respects more insidious phase of colonization. The construction of community

can also be taken as a new form of colonization where former oppressors are being oppressed. Lucy's ownership of land in territory where the racially disenfranchised are trying to regain power has evoked not only the darkest acts of gender conflict but the history of South Africa. The new era of post colonial situation in democratic South Africa becomes a major problem for whites and it can be agreed that Coetzee captures with appalling skill the white dilemma in South Africa.

Identity Formation, Narrativization and Working through of Trauma in *Disgrace*

Disgrace is a parable of South African history and society whose narration is focalized through the consciousness of a character, David Lurie, where everything is filtered from his perspective. In *Disgrace*, he paints landscape of a country, South Africa, where the regime trading apartheid has just closed its shutters and people are yet to be adjusted to the climate change. The visual metaphors used in narrating the scenes carry us at the place and in the time where characters of novel are struggling to live. Lucy's rape, an act of the highest insult a man can do to a woman, and the challenges the characters in *Disgrace* face are just like other common people especially those during apartheid South Africa. He significantly narrates though apartheid era is over politically, the aftermath or "hangover from the past" is being enacted in one way or another even in post-apartheid era (*Disgrace* 40). Rape, seduction, burglary, violence, theft and assault are not still over which now are functioning to make the life traumatic. Coetzee narrativizes the trauma of South African people from the perspective of Lurie. The changing political circumstances in South Africa influence the identities of people especially that of whites and Coetzee establishes the identities of people through the narrativization of their stories.

J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace* which is a 'reflector' of historical conditions and actual political circumstances shows rape, murder, torture, violence in all and every imaginable shape and sizes which are the characteristic features of the contemporary South African novel. Coetzee allegorically narrativizes the trauma of South Africans

from the perspective of Lurie who is traumatized by history; “[a] history of wrong” (156).

Most of the novels of Coetzee are allegorical. Jason Cowley writes, “J. M. Coetzee is a more subtle writer than the politically explicit Gordimer, preferring to work through allegory and parable, perfecting a kind of prison literature [. . .]” (18). *Disgrace* does not escape from this exception and many critics regard *Disgrace* as an allegorical novel. About the allegorical reach of the novel, Daniel Davies writes, “What transforms *Disgrace* from a good, compelling book into a work of brilliance is its allegorical reach. At the barest structural level, the novel is highly schematic-full of ironic parallels and tidy symmetries [. . .]” (152). Similarly, Charles Sarvan also writes, “*Disgrace* can be read as an existential allegory, and the intention here is to suggest, and share, this perspective” (26). Regarding the allegorical aspect of the novel Allen Brooke writes, “When J.M. Coetzee’s eighth novel, *Disgrace*, was awarded the Booker Prize in Britain, the director of the judges’ panel, Gerald Kaufman, described it as ‘an allegory about what is happening to the human race in the postcolonial era’”(27).

Now the question arises why Coetzee’s novels have allegorical rich or what is the purpose behind allegorical writing of *Disgrace*? M.H. Abrams writes, “An allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the ‘literal,’ or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification (5).

Disgrace is inclined towards allegory because through allegorical reach Coetzee wants to explore the relation of new South Africa with apartheid South Africa. Through the allegorical perspective of David Lurie, he allegorically presents the plight of South Africans in post-apartheid period. It is a fictionalized form of current affairs of post-apartheid South Africa and Coetzee wants to show how post-apartheid South Africa resembles with apartheid South Africa and states that the legacy of apartheid traumatizes

life of South Africans in post-apartheid period. Coetzee represents historical event i.e. apartheid in the setting of post-apartheid South Africa and for that he chooses allegorical approach “in which the characters and actions that are signified literally in their turn represents, or ‘allegorize,’ historical personage and events” (5).

In psychoanalysis the creation of life narratives – and storytelling in general – is a precondition for the patient’s ‘recovery’. The phrase ‘coming to terms with the past’ is of importance here, because it means ‘recovery’ is achieved by putting one’s experience into words, by telling a story. As Crossley has emphasized, “[...] Human psychology has an essentially narrative structure” (19). Speaking about the terrible truth, speaking about the unspeakable, would help the victim. This truth then has not only a “personal therapeutic but a public or collective value as well” (20). He further says, “Narratives are used to rebuild the individual’s shattered sense of identity and meaning” (21).

Disgrace is a story about the trouble and pain endured by people both whites and blacks in post-apartheid South Africa. The lives of the people have been traumatized from various sorts of violence. Coetzee, by narrating real trauma of South Africans in fictional form alleviates the trauma and gives identity to white people like Lucy whose identity is shattered in post-apartheid South Africa and to blacks like Petrus who had no identity in the apartheid period and who even today are perceived with the stereotype of apartheid.

Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, a painful narrative of trauma of the people, not only makes successful attempt to define post-apartheid as traumatic event but also documents the nature of pain and most importantly attempts to heal the pain of the victims by narrativizing their story and revive their identity. Various trauma theorists opine that the response to the traumas is a way to heal them and to change the situation to avoid trauma. In this regard, Jeffery C. Alexander writes:

[. . .] Political scandals are cause for indignation; that economic depression are cause for despair ; that lost wars create a sense of anger and aimlessness; that disaster in the physical environment lead to panic; that assaults on the human body lead to intense anxiety; that technical disaster creates concerns, even phobias, about risk. The response to such traumas will be efforts to alter the circumstances that caused them (3).

Trauma generates different sorts of reactions from the people especially from those who have been directly or indirectly affected from it. People respond in different ways as they attempt to cope with trauma. In *Disgrace*, not only directly influenced characters like Lurie and Lucy are affected from trauma, characters like Ettinger, Bill Shaw are also traumatized who believe “It’s like being in a war all over again” (*Disgrace* 102). Coetzee in one way or other responds to the traumatic situations of South African people by narrating their story in the form of fiction where marginalized character like Petrus, Pollux by the history have got their voices. In the time where news report and especially government are hiding the dirty secrets of South African society, he reveals them to the world.

Similarly, Arthur Neal writes, “[. . .] Traumatic events typically lead to progress: “The very fact that a disruptive event has occurred” means that “new opportunities emerge for innovation and change” (18). To make his argument strong he writes “permanent changes were introduced into the [American] nation as a result of the Civil War, the Great Depression, and the trauma of World War II” (5). Coetzee, in the novel, gives the examples of innovation and changes which have been brought by apartheid where blacks are moving towards innovation and progress.

Coetzee very importantly shows the improving social and economic status of blacks in post-apartheid South Africa. He highlights, how Petrus, a traumatized character by apartheid who represents all blacks of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa is

reviving the lost identity. Lurie gets surprised when:

Petrus has burrowed a tractor, from where he has no idea, to which he has coupled the old rotary plough that has lain rusting behind the stable since before Lucy's time. In a matter of hours he has ploughed the whole of his land. All very swift and businesslike; all very unlike Africa. In olden times, that is to say ten years ago, it would have taken him days with a hand-plough and oxen (151).

This shows how Africa and Africans are taking part in new global change though it is gradual and slow. A black like Petrus is improving his economic and social status and “[. . .] [I]s busy establishing his own lands” (76). He was a hired worker of Lucy who “slaved to get the market garden going for Lucy” (140) but now he “is busy with his house” (196). Blacks like Petrus, who used to call himself “I am the gardener and the dog-man” (64) now calls “I am not any more the dog-man” and has built an ability to organize grand “party” for the villagers (129). He initially used to work for Lucy and was Lucy’s “new assistant” (62), but as the story unfolds, he builds a power, “[. . .] to take over Lucy’s land. Then he would like to have Ettinger’s too, or enough of it to run a herd on” (117). His economic status progresses and now it is strong enough to challenge well established whites of the town.

Experiencing trauma is loss of identity of the victim who suffers either directly or indirectly but bringing back the lost identity rebuilding the collectivity’s earlier life is very important. In this context, Alexander writes, “Identities are continuously constructed and secured not only by facing the present and future but also by reconstructing the collectivity’s earlier life” (22). He further writes, “Once the collective identity has been so reconstructed, there will eventually emerge the period of ‘calming down’” (22). Lurie and his daughter time and again experience trauma in the aftermath. Finally, their trauma is healed and lost identity is revived though complete healing of trauma is not possible.

Coetzee “by allowing members of wider publics to participate in the pain of others” has “broaden the realm of social understanding and sympathy, and they provide powerful avenues for new forms of social incorporation” (24). Coetzee by narrating the trauma of South Africans to the wider audience also develops the sense of moral responsibility among people and most importantly to newly elected democratic government. Jeffrey C. Alexander is of the opinion that persuasive narrative is very important to extend “social solidarities” and to develop the feeling of “moral responsibility” (27).

Traumatic events once befall in individual’s life they do not leave the victim easily. Lucy, after she was raped by three African rapists “in a house full of ugly memories and goes on brooding on what happened” (*Disgrace* 155). Lurie and Lucy are frequently haunted by the aftermath of traumatic events because “[t]he shock simply doesn’t go away” (156). They repeat their traumatic memory and slowly and gradually struggle to get back to normal “[. . .] to go on as before” (105). In one way or the other they try to forget their traumatic memory by ‘working through’ of trauma.

Dominick LaCapra, a prominent historico-cultural trauma theorist writes about the concept of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ by taking them from Freudian psychoanalysis and then develops them in a way that make them especially interesting for use in a historical studies. He writes in his essay “Trauma, Absence, Loss”, “‘Acting out’ and ‘working through’ are interrelated modes of responding to loss or historical trauma” (713). In an “Interview with Yad Vashem” he says:

This [acting out and working through] kind of approach has applications elsewhere, but it’s especially important with respects to events (or series of events) –often traumatic events that are heavily charged with emotions and that always bring out the implication of the observer in the observed. This is what I understand as transference. (141)

LaCapra applies the approaches of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ to tackle the traumatic memory in order to get relief from the aftermath of trauma. The traumatized characters like Lurie, Lucy and Ettinger in *Disgrace* ‘act out’ and ‘work through’ traumatic memory in order to have anew beginning to come “[. . .] back from the darkness to light”(Disgrace 107).

LaCapra is of the opinion that the traumatized victim can make further steps in the past by ‘acting out’ which means repeating his/her traumatic memory and through ‘working through’ where one works through trauma and becomes able to distinguish past, present and future. According to him:

Acting out is related to repetition and even the repetition compulsion the tendency to repeat something compulsively. This is very clear in the case of people who undergo a trauma. They have a tendency to relive the past, to be haunted by ghost or even to exist in the present as if one were still in the past, with no distance from it. (142-43)

The victims of trauma repeat their traumatic memory because it is their compulsion in order to come out from the effects of trauma. In *Disgrace*, the traumatized victims like Lurie and Lucy who undergo trauma, repeat their past experience frequently. Time and again one discusses his/her traumatizing past event to the other and reminds what he/she has gone through. Lurie is of the opinion that “the present situation is different. Lucy is objectively in danger” because “We [They] have had that demonstrated to us [them]” (*Disgrace* 140). The father insists on his daughter “[. . .] you can’t possibly stay” in the farm and Lucy also believes “They will come back for me” (158). Their retelling of the past memories in the present is ‘working through’ of their trauma.

Lurie and Lucy at first cannot decide what necessary measure to take in order to be safe “in a new world they live in” (117). According to LaCapra:

Victims of trauma tend to relive occurrences, or at least find that those

occurrences intrude on their present existence, for example in flashbacks, or in nightmares or in words that are compulsively repeated and that don't seem to have their ordinary meaning because they are taking on different connotations from another situation, another place. (143)

The traumatic effects of the victims exist in their life and affect their present. Lurie and Lucy are mentally disturbed realizing that they may face threat at any moment in that 'darkest Africa'. Lurie suggests his daughter to "Go to Holland" (157) because though "Holland may not be the most exciting of places to live, but at least it doesn't breed nightmares" (*Disgrace* 61-62).

In *Disgrace*, the trauma of the past of Lurie and Lucy repeats in the present in the form of flashbacks and nightmares and torment their present. The following lines very clearly show how Lurie is traumatized in the present:

The demons do not pass him by. He has nightmares of his own in which he wallows in a bed of blood, or, panting, shouting soundlessly, runs from the man with the face like a hawk, like a Benin mask, like Thoth. On night, half sleepwalking, half demented, he strips his own bed, even turns the mattress over, looking for stains. (*Disgrace* 121)

The demons, which are mainly the ghostly images of three black men who assaulted him and raped his daughter, do not leave and he is "[a]fraid they [the rapist] are going to come back?" (156). He is disturbed from his recurring thought that "[t]hey [Rapist] could have taken her [Lucy] away with them" (109).

Similarly, like her father, Lucy too struggles hard to come back to the normal state from the traumatized state. Her situation becomes worse because "[s]he is not improving" (121). She frequently has her nightmares:

Lucy was frightened, frightened near to death. Her voice choked, she could not breathe, her limbs went numb. This is not happening, she said to

herself as the men forced her down; it is just a dream, a nightmare. While the men, for their part, drank up her fear, revelled in it, did all they could to hurt her, to menace her, to heighten her terror. Call your dogs! they said to her. Go on, call your dogs! No dogs? Then let us show you dogs! (160)

Lucy is occupied with fear that nothing will save her “here in darkest Africa” (95). The nightmares which she frequently has heighten her terror and make her realize the situation is aggravating. However, both Lurie and Lucy are ‘working through’ of traumatic situations in order to seek solace from the traumatic memory and have prospect in the present. According to LaCapra, “In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene” (21).

Lurie and Lucy, both, in order to come out from the mire of trauma ‘act out’ with trauma where “one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop”(21). Actually, ‘acting out’ is of vital significance to act out the past for those who have been severely traumatized. In addition to, only after acting out, the traumatized people can work through trauma by gaining the critical distance to distinguish past, present and future and make sure in which state one is and what efforts he/she can make for the future. In this regard LaCapra writes:

Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transference relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in the memory that something happened to one (or one’s people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future. (21-22)

Traumatized victims are in confused state when they act out their traumas where they cannot make any distinction between past, present and future. Lurie “[f]or the first time

has a taste of what it will be like to be an old man, tired to the bone, without hopes, without desires, indifferent to the future (*Disgrace* 107). Similarly, Lucy “[a]s a woman alone on a farm she has no future, that is clear” (134). They are overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past and they cannot decide which the necessary measures to overcome their past are. In ‘working through’ the person tries to gain a critical distance on a problem and distinguishes between past, present and future and can make necessary steps towards future as well as can live in the present.

Actually, ‘working through’ does not mean avoiding the past or simply forgetting it by engaging oneself more in the present. It means “[. . .] coming to terms with the trauma, including its details, and critically engaging the tendency to act out the past and even to recognize why it may be necessary” (LaCapra 144). Lurie, after the rape of his daughter cannot make any concrete decision what to do next. After constant acting out with trauma he finally suggests his daughter, “[. . .] If you fail, you will not be able to live with yourself. You have a duty to yourself, to the future, to your own self-respect” (*Disgrace* 133). According to LaCapra working through means:

The ability to say to oneself: “Yes that happened to me back then. It was distressing, overwhelming perhaps I can’t entirely disengage myself from it, but I am existing here and now and this is different from back then.”

There may be other possibilities, but it’s via the working through that one acquires the possibility. (144)

Lucy finally begins to engage her life in the present, sees possibilities of the future and makes decision to continue her life as usual at her own farm. Lucy, with her constant working through trauma “is healing too, or if not healing then forgetting, growing scar tissue around the memory of that day sheathing it, sealing it off. So that one day she may be able to say, ‘The day we were robbed and think of it merely as the day when they were robbed (*Disgrace* 141).

Lurie, regarding the safety of his daughter, worries a lot and wants her to “[t]ake a break for six months or a year, until things have improved in this country (*Disgrace* 157). However, Lucy is not in a mood to run away from there like a defeated soldier in the war. On the contrary to Lurie’s proposal, she says, “No, I’m not leaving” (157), “If I leave now, David, I won’t come back. Thank you for the offer but it won’t work” (205). Lucy now learns to settle herself and she understands the situation differently from the past. She wants to make every decision by herself “without being pushed” (157). When David tries to push her hard to leave the farm she angrily says, “I cannot be a child forever. You cannot be a father forever. I know you mean well, but you are not the guide I need, not at this time” (161). The above lines show how Lucy being bold works through traumatic situation without seeking help of others. Though she is terribly traumatized after being “pregnant” “[f]rom that day” (136) of rape, she makes a decision to stay in her farm because “[s]he is a forward –looking not backward –looking” (197). It is her working through trauma which helps her to leave the past distressing, overwhelming memories behind and exists in the present with new possibilities.

According to La Capra:

In acting out, one relives the past as if one were the other including oneself as another in the past –one is fully possessed by the other or the other’s ghost; and in working through, one tries to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage in life in the present, to assume responsibility. (148)

Lurie is possessed by the ghostly image of the violators who haunt Lurie and he thinks that “[i]f the ghosts of Lucy’s violators still hover in her bedroom, then surely they ought to be chased out, not allowed to take it over as their sanctum” (*Disgrace* 111). Though possessed by the ghostly image of the violators he makes effort to chase them away to make the things right “[s]o he moves his belongings into Lucy’s room” (111).

Furthermore, he believes “Lucy must work her own way back from the darkness to the light. Until she is herself again [. . .]” (107). Lurie, realizing his responsibility towards his daughter and he makes efforts to engage his life more in the present rather than sit traumatized by the past.

Traumatic memory when expressed by the traumatized victims can heal the victim from the pain of trauma. In this regard Avishai Margalit writes:

Making the traumatic, repressed communal memories open, explicit, and conscious is said to have healing power. We are asked to believe that this is the only way to overcome the irrationality that springs from past traumas, and the only way to gain peace of mind. This belief, based on the prison metaphor, is at the heart of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa. (5)

The traumatized character by ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ express their traumatic memories to the other which finally helps them to make “Everything peaceful again” because with their constant acting out and working through, they finally know how to tackle their present rather than continue traumatized by the past (*Disgrace* 208). In this regard, Neil J. Smelser writes, “The occurrence of the disorder results from an accretion of excitation caused by the trauma, first blocked by repression, stored up, expressed in a symptom, and then relieved by catharsis and verbal working through (33). The characters in the novel build healing power by bringing their repressed memories in the light of consciousness.

The traumatized characters in *Disgrace* ‘act out’ where they repeat the past traumatic experience as if it were fully enacted and ‘work through’ to engage their life more in the present by being able to make distinction between past, present and future to assume responsibility. The traumatized victim build up their critical faculty to perceive their present in a different way and do not allow their past spoil their present. They in

order to adjust push themselves to the periphery of the cultural structures of South Africa. Similarly, Coetzee too, by narrating the traumatic stories of South Africans, helps to revive their lost identity in the global arena and makes the readers perceive new South Africa altering the old perception and makes them acquainted with social and economic transformation and transformation in the ideologies in the new generation.

Ethical Responsibility and Forgiveness in *Disgrace*

Coetzee, in making his protagonists become more alive to the reality of other people's lives, and urging his readers to overcome a certain state of ignorance presents fiction that is in accord with the basic ethics of humanism. By engaging self-consciously with the ethics of writing often through the portrayal of the conscience-stricken white writer, Coetzee has chosen to enter the long running and expansive debate about the ethics of intellectualism and the authority of the writer. Coetzee shows how protagonist like Lucy works in accordance of ethical principles who gives the more importance to the 'other' than the 'self'. This shows her feeling of responsibility and moral duty towards 'other' even if they are enemies and her act of forgiving her own enemies can be regarded as her ethical values beyond measure. *Disgrace* is a novel about humiliation and the nature of punishment and justice and forgiveness and redemption in a country. Desmond Manderson writes "[E]thics implies an unavoidable responsibility to another which Levinas exhorts as 'first philosophy'" (3). Moreover, the idea of responsibility offered by Levinas makes unique sense of the central insights of the duty of care: that we must put others first, and that this responsibility is not an unfortunate imposition on our naturally individual and autonomous subjectivity, but embedded in the idea of responsibility, and the source of our individuality. In *Disgrace*, the attitude of responsibility is especially shown by Lucy, who is white, to both blacks and whites whereas blacks show their responsible attitude towards blacks only. The protagonists in *Disgrace* are actually concerned with ethical principles which are connected with beliefs

and principles about what is right and wrong. Even though blacks like Petrus, Pollux indirectly and directly assault and humiliate the whites, they never avoid their duty towards them as their neighbors.

Lucy, by showing her ethical act towards infamous blacks tries to build unity between whites and blacks who are in alterity. According to Arjuna Weerasooriya:

Ethical subjectivity, receiving its unity from alterity instead of identity, is foremost a corporeal being, not a rational or abstract ego of any kind.

Levinas asserts that ethics is 'pre-originary': prior to distinctions between subject and object, reason and emotion, matter and idea, and philosophy and religion. [. . .] It is a radical exposure to the other. (36)

Lucy exposes herself towards needs of her neighbour Petrus, instead of making effort to build her own identity in the village. She has 'infinite responsibility' for her neighbour and tries to establish relation between 'other' and 'me'. Levinas presents ethics "as a complete separation between the 'ego' and the 'other' which is also a relation between the two" (36). Lucy forgets division between 'other' and 'me' which is like establishing unity between them. Weerasooriya writes, "He [Levinas] takes ethics to be an asymmetrical relation with an opaque other that decentres the ego subject. This relation is concretely produced as 'my infinite responsibility to the other person'" (34). Lucy lets her ego to dissolve and forgets how blacks are causing her different sorts of problems.

During the regime of apartheid, whites always perceived blacks as 'other' and segregated them in terms of health, education, ownership of property, etc. When blacks responded against infamous segregation with violence, whites were compelled to respond to the 'other', i.e. blacks. Edward Roesch-Marsh, writes about the concept of ethics of Levinas:

The other person, variously depicted as the 'orphan', the 'widow' the 'stranger' and the 'neighbour', calls the subject into question and

challenges its 'place' in being. The encounter with the face is onerous and makes demands upon the self. The subject is compelled to respond to the Other who awakens it from its self-concern, redirecting its attention outwards. Ethics, broadly speaking, describes this movement toward the other person. (311)

The Blacks challenged the inferior attitudes of the Whites with brutal encounter mainly through different forms of violence like an assault, rape, burglary, etc. Their demand made whites to think about needs of blacks and their voices. Lucy, after being assaulted makes her more attentive towards the needs of others and in doing that the 'infinite responsibility' she shows to the blacks is her ethics. In establishing the better relationship between the self and the 'other', Lucy is "oriented toward the other person" (311).

Language, which is a part of culture plays vital role in establishing relationship between people of different culture. Lucy stays in a black community and she is familiar with the local language. Lucy's learning of the local language and culture is identifying herself with that community. About Levinas' views about importance of language Edward Roesch-Marsh writes, "Levinas confesses, that is 'marvel of marvels', for it is through the medium of language that the Other is welcomed and hospitality extended" (312). When Lucy and Lurie go to the party organized by Petrus, "Lucy speaks a few words in Xhosa" and presents Petrus' wife a gift (*Disgrace* 129). Lucy, by speaking local language in the party tries to familiarize herself with a group of blacks. After Lucy presenting the gift: "Lucy is our benefactor, says Petrus; and then to Lucy; You are our benefactor" (129). This shows friendly and generous behaviour of Petrus towards his guests and it extends the degree of hospitality to Lurie and Lucy even though at first Petrus "does not play an eager host" to them (129).

The responsible attitude shown by whites amongst anarchy and time of crisis is one of the positive aspects of the novel. Misfortunes happen in the life of Lurie and Lucy

but they do not blame others rather they themselves take responsibility of the things which happen to them.

According to Alphonso Lingis, being responsible means accepting the fact that “I am responsible for the very faults of another, for his deeds and misdeeds. The condition of being hostage is an authentic figure of responsibility” (4). David Lurie lives a disgraceful life when he seduces his own student Melanie Isaacs. They have sexual intercourse three times, and that immoral act leads him into ‘disgrace’. On account of Melanie’s complaint, David receives a memorandum from the office of the Vice-Rector and is asked to appear before the ‘University’s Committee of Inquiry’. When the members of the committee ask, “Are you in love with this young woman who is dragging your name through the mud?” he says, “She isn’t responsible. Don’t blame her” (*Disgrace* 45). Here, in these lines, Lurie insists that Melanie is innocent and she has nothing to do with their infamous affair. He regards himself as a “servant of Eros” and appears to blame his uncontrollable lust for the young woman: “It is not a defense. You want a confession, I give you a confession. As for the impulse, it was far from ungovernable. I have denied similar impulses many times in the past, I am ashamed to say” (*Disgrace* 52)

In the same way, Lucy too does not want to blame ‘other’ though evil happened to her. When Lurie wants her to realize that she should leave the farm and go to Holland because she “can not possibly stay”, Lucy reflects positively on the same situation by saying: “But isn’t there another way of looking at it, David? What if [. . .] what if *that* is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too” (158). The significance of these statements of Lucy’s is that she throws positive light to the negative situation and even suggests her father, Lurie to change the way he observes the things who regards, “His temperament is not going to change, he is too old for that. His temperament is fixed, set” (2).

David Lurie, an ex-professor of Cape Town University, who lives in the farm of his daughter Lucy does not befriend with neighbors like Ettinger, Bev Shaw, Bill Shaw at first because he thinks “people like Bev and Bill Shaw are not going to lead me to a higher life”(74). However, his attitude towards them changes with the passage of time and shows his responsibility towards them by helping Bev and Bill Shaw in their clinic. Though Lurie differs from Bev and Bill Shaw in terms of education, profession, culture and thought they build a good relationship. Alphonso Lingis writes, “Responsibility is in fact a relationship with the other, in his very alterity” (3). Lurie at last understands the way of country life and makes him able to befriend with people in his very alterity.

Responsibility means the ability to respond to the predicament of another person. Alphonso Lingis writes, “Responsibility is enacted not only in offering one’s properties or one’s possession to the other, but in giving one’s own substance for the other. The figure of maternity is an authentic figure of responsibility” (3). Lucy, after she is raped by three African thugs, becomes pregnant “[f]rom that day” (*Disgrace* 197). But unlike to the expectation of Lurie who “thought you [Lucy] took Ovral” she is “not having an abortion” because she thinks “I am not prepared to go through again” (198). She makes that decision because of her realization of the responsibility one has to take for being mother. When David asks why “[a]re you telling me you are going to have the child?” she replies: “I am a woman, David. Do you think I hate children? Should I choose against the child because of who its father is?” (198). This shows her responsible attitude towards that inborn child even though the father is unknown black African among “The gang of three” (199). She here does not act on the principle of racism but on the principle of maternity. Lucy, perhaps a lesbian decides to carry the child of rape to term and agrees to marry Petrus, who is not the biological father. Though this looks like an acceptance of rape, but actually it is a refusal to be raped, by instrumentalizing reproduction because she is not prepared to go through same traumatic experience again.

Similarly, another striking example of responsibility taken by Lucy as a responsible neighbor is when she stops David when he is “going to telephone the police” to inform about the three African thugs who assaulted them (132). She stops him by saying “It’s not Petrus’ fault. If you call in the police, the evening will be destroyed for him. Be sensible” (133). This shows Lucy’s positive attitude even towards her enemies and her ethical act is mark of optimism in post-apartheid South Africa. Lucy here understands the importance of understanding the alterity of another individual to act on the principles of right and wrong. Adam Sharman, in his essay on Derrida, writes, “Derrida says, in order for any human society to maintain itself against ethical lines, each individual must recognize and respect the alterity of another individual: I must be responsible in the face of other as other and answer for what I do before him or her” (94).

Forgiveness has become an important theme in connection to South Africa especially in post-apartheid period. Actually it is important to all post-conflict situations, and even more than that to all human beings. Desmond Tutu, who is the author of *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999), one of the best-known books worldwide about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, knew forgiveness is surely not the same as reconciliation, but without forgiveness, coexistence in the Rainbow Nation, as South Africa with all its different peoples is sometimes called, impossible.

Coetzee very significantly raises the issue of forgiveness in *Disgrace* in different context. As post-apartheid South Africa is no better than apartheid South Africa where the oppressor once has been oppressed, Coetzee shows how white victims like Lucy is forgiving black victimizers as well as Lurie, who is also the oppressor for seducing his student Melanie asks for forgiveness with his victim. Lucy forgives those enemies who are like terrible insult of humanity. She by doing that follows principle of ‘absolute forgiveness’ which resembles with what Jacques Derrida says in his essay “On Forgiveness”: “In principle, there is no limit to forgiveness, no measure, no moderation,

no 'to what point?'(27). As stated by Derrida, Lucy's act shows the moral deed of forgiveness is beyond any limit and boundaries.

However, Lurie had no intention to forgive the guilty and he was fully possessed with strong mentality to punish them. So, the decision of Lucy, which is not to lay charges of an assault and rape to the African thugs, comes as surprise to Lurie who express his dilemma: "Really, Lucy, from beginning to end I fail to understand. I fail to understand why you did not lay real charges against them, and now I fail to understand why you are protecting Petrus. Petrus is not an innocent party, Petrus is with them" (*Disgrace* 133). The idea of Lucy not to lay real charges to the offender is something which not only Lurie fails to understand at first but also readers if they do not constantly ponder upon to understand the ethical value of her act. Actually, Lucy wants to establish an ethical relationship with blacks of post-apartheid South Africa which Lurie does not understand.

In this regard, Simon Critchley writes views of Levins, "What distinguishes an ethical relation from other relations (to oneself or to objects) is, Levinas claims that it is a relation with that which cannot be comprehended or subsumed under the categories of understanding" (32). Due to her ethics and her way of behaving which relies in the foundation of what is right and what is wrong Lurie does not understand the gravity of her ethical acts. Hence, her views about Petrus are different from those of Lurie who says, "As for Petrus, he is not some hired labourer whom I can sack because in my opinion he is mixed up with the wrong people. That's all gone, gone with the wind" (133).

Forgiveness is not and should not be normal; it should remain exceptional and extraordinary, and should address the impossible. In this regard Derrida writes:

If one is only prepared to forgive what appears forgivable, what the church calls 'venial sin', then the very idea of forgiveness would disappear. [. . .]

Forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot, or should not, forgive; there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable. That is to say that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible. (32-33)

The ethical principle of impossibility of forgiveness has been followed by Lucy where she even grants forgiveness to the guilty even though he does not ask for forgiveness. Due to her ethical principle she acts “beyond laws, norms, or any principles” (35).

Lucy’s act of forgiveness is completely her decision and she does not want any other third party to involve between the guilty and the victim and stop her from doing what she feels right to do. Derrida writes:

In order to follow a vein of the Abrahamic tradition, forgiveness must engage two singularities: the guilty (the perpetrator as they say in South Africa) and the victim. As soon as a third party intervenes, one can again speak of amnesty, reconciliation, reparation, etc, but certainly not of pure forgiveness in the strict sense. (42)

The deed of forgiveness granted by Lucy to the guilty is pure forgiveness because the third party becomes unable to interfere in that matter. Lucy denies her father Lurie to interfere her in her personal matters and says: “I want to decide by myself, without being pushed” because “you think you understand but finally you don’t. Because you can’t. (*Disgrace* 157). Her ethical action resembles to what Derrida says “forgive the unforgivable, and without condition” (39).

Forgiving means overcoming anger and vengefulness where the victim represses his/her anger and has mercy to the guilty person. Lurie who is possessed by the mentality of vengefulness from the day he and his daughter were assaulted was waiting for a day to let his anger come out. Once when he meets one of the thugs who assaulted him he beats

him with strong disgust and rage. While beating the boy “Never has he felt such elemental rage. He would like to give the boy what he deserves: a sound thrashing” and show “What it is like to be a savage” (*Disgrace* 206). This shows Lurie is occupied with attitude of vengeance no matter what will be the consequence. However, Lucy stops him from doing the great damage and says to the injured boy “Come, let us go and wash it [wound] (207). This comes as a real surprise to Lurie who says, “What is Lucy up to, protecting the boy?” (208). Definitely, Lucy’s act is full of surprises as she lets go the guilty one from being punished neither from court nor from the hands of victim too.

Lucy is of the opinion that “[t]his can’t go on David” (208). Both parties are fully prepared to harm each other that makes things worse as Lucy says “I can’t cope with all of you together” because there is possibility of violence (208). Lucy’s intention to forgive the guilty ones is to decrease the intensity of hostility between her and the black Africans. However, Lurie says, “I don’t agree. I don’t agree with what you are doing. That is not how vengeance works, Lucy. Vengeance is like a fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets” (112). Here Lurie completely misses Lucy’s point that she wants to forgive the guilty. Avishai Marglit writes:

Forgiveness is a conscious decision to change one’s attitude and to overcome anger and vengefulness. [. . .] Forgiveness is not a policy but rather a case of overcoming resentment and vengefulness, of mastering anger and humiliation. Such overcoming is a result of a long effort rather than a decision to do something on the spot. (193-204)

The idea of forgiveness is a solo decision of Lucy and she is more concerned about that because she knows “I am the one who has to live here. What happened to me is my business” (*Disgrace* 133). Lurie wants to avenge the guilty, whereas Lucy abandons the idea of revenge she wants to overcome ‘anger and vengefulness’. As David does not understand the gravity of her actions he thinks all Lucy is doing is to protect her from

upcoming threat and in this regard Lucy replies, “I am not just trying to save my skin. If that is what you think, you miss the point entirely” (112).

When people forgive, their responses toward what they think of, feel about people who have offended or injured them become more positive and less negative. One might describe forgiveness as the release of negative emotions pertaining to a situation, no longer holding a grudge. Forgiveness means holding nothing against each other any more and it is making a fresh start. Lucy wants to make a new start and for that she understands the importance of forgiving those rapist African thugs. Willemijn de Ridder writes in his thesis:

One of the important goals of the TRC was to stimulate forgiveness in literature and politics. [. . .] One cannot deny that forgiveness to some degree is important to create a sustainable peace, especially as long as the different struggling parties deliberately want to live together within the same borders after the conflict. (9)

In post-apartheid South Africa, people of various races and more importantly the Blacks and the Whites are struggling to establish a long lasting peaceful relationship between them so that they can live together in peace and harmony. Hence, it is very important for one to forgive the other and one should not hesitate to initiate such challenging task.

Regarding the importance of forgiveness, Avishai Marglit quotes from Romans, “We are all sinners, or at least we are all in a state of guilt. We all need forgiveness, and so we must all be capable of forgiving. This is the view of *New Testament*” (194). Lucy forgives the criminals because it was right in accordance with the principal of ethics and it was necessary too. Lucy, being the White in one way or the other is taken as an evil of apartheid by the Blacks. Whereas the Blacks are also causing violence to the Whites in post-apartheid period and they are criminals too. So, the Whites in order to get forgiveness from the Blacks have to forgive the Blacks for the wrongs they are doing so

that they [Blacks] will also be capable of forgiving the Whites and finally both will be able to live together in peace and harmony.

However, Lurie fails to understand everything what Lucy does and tries to do. So he asks Lucy “Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out? Do you hope you can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present?” (*Disgrace* 112). Lurie thinks Lucy is accepting the punishment for the crime of past which is ‘apartheid’. Similarly, he thinks Lucy “wants to make up for the wrongs of the past, but this is not the way to do it” (133). Despite Lucy’s persistent effort Lurie does not get her intention right so Lucy says, “No. You keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions. I don’t act in terms of abstractions. Until you make an effort to see that, I can’t help you” (112).

Lurie asks for suggestion with his neighbour for what to do next to make the things all right. He inquires to Bev Shaw about Petrus who says, “You underestimate Petrus. Petrus slaved to get the market garden going for Lucy. Without Petrus Lucy wouldn’t be where she is now. I am not saying she owes him everything, but she owes him a lot” (140). Bev Shaw who is a neighbor to Petrus does not think Petrus is a bad man.

Slowly and gradually Lurie too starts changing the way he sees and understands the things and people. The guilt of seducing his own student in the past has taken him “[. . .] into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself [himself]” (172). He finally makes up his mind to ask for the ‘forgiveness’ with the father of Melanie Isaacs. He goes to her house and says to her father, “I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs. Isaacs. I ask for your pardon” (171). Even though he was late and he knows what he did cannot be undone he asks for forgiveness to seek a mental solace in his disgraceful life. Avishai Marglit writes:

Although it is impossible to undo what has been done, since the past cannot be changed, if it is possible to change our interpretation of the

past. By expressing remorse the offender presents himself in a new light, a light that can be projected into the past. His ability to feel remorse attests that he is not basically evil, even if the act he performed was abominable. (199)

Lurie expresses remorse in front of Mr. Isaacs for his past deeds which cannot be undone. This shows he finally gets the sense his daughter Lucy was trying to give him.

Lucy's forgiving her offender and avoiding the feeling of resentment or desire to take revenge is a positive sign of reconciliation. In regard to the outcome of ethical forgiveness Avishai Marglit writes, "The ideal end-result of forgiveness is the restoration of the original relationship between the offender and the forgiver and this can ideally be achieved only when the forgiver does not feel any resentment or desire to avenge the injury (205-6). Lucy, Lurie and finally Mr. Isaacs too do not feel any resentment or desire to avenge the guilty and their ethical deeds above all Lucy's come as rays of hope in chaotic post-apartheid South Africa. Similarly, though Petrus was busy in building his own property he is not "too busy to help out" (*Disgrace* 196)

In problematic situation the optimistic deeds done by newer generation people in post-apartheid South Africa gives something to cherish and expect things are becoming better in post-apartheid South Africa. About hope Avishai Marglit writes, "Hope, then is hope about a harmonious moral (ethical) order toward which history is striving in spite of temporary setbacks". The evils of apartheid which prevented South Africa from achieving the major progresses with racial harmony and brotherhood among people is gradually becoming weak. After temporary setbacks, South Africans, especially of the new generation believe in the importance of racial harmony to achieve their hopes. Marglit further writes "we need morality to overcome our natural indifference to other (33). In the context of South Africa which is plagued by horrors of segregation policy it has become very important to act on ethical principles to avoid indifference among

people which definitely has become natural due to apartheid an indirect form of colonialism.

III. Conclusion: Traumatic Awakening in *Disgrace*

On the surface, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* tells us something we all suspect and fear that political change can do almost nothing to eliminate human misery. Even though democratic election of 1994 marked the legislative end of apartheid in South Africa, people of new democratic South Africa still experience threats from roots of apartheid. Coetzee, in the background of post-apartheid South Africa shows the racial tensions and conflicts like that of apartheid era where violence and scene of rural crime against rural whites by black hooligans, makes the life of the sufferers traumatic. The various forms of violence like rape, assault, burglary, etc which dominated apartheid South Africa continues in post-apartheid era, and traumatize lives of South Africans. Coetzee, by narrativizing the traumatic story of the victims makes effort to reduce intensity of trauma and in the same way tries to rebuild the lost identity of people like Petrus.

Coetzee in *Disgrace* makes a successful attempt to define post-apartheid as traumatic as apartheid since lives of people have been traumatized from legacies of apartheid in post-apartheid era. Trauma theorists opine response to the trauma is an effort to alter the traumatic circumstances and Coetzee by narrativizing the traumatic story of the people attempts to lessen their pain generated from trauma. Similarly, Coetzee narrativizes the trauma of South African people to the wider audience to develop sense of moral responsibility towards growing problems of present South Africa, extend social solidarities and most importantly it functions to give moral obligation to newly elected democratic government towards the needs of the people.

Though the protagonists in *Disgrace* such as David Lurie and Lucy are traumatized by the history of wrong, the efforts they make to 'work through' their

traumas are of vital importance. Lucy and Lurie, 'work through' trauma to tackle their traumatic memories in order to get relief from them. They, being victims of trauma relieve occurrences in flashbacks and nightmares which intrude on their present existence. As they are haunted by ghost of the past in the present, they feel as if they are living in the past and their future is blocked fatalistically. However, they 'work through' their traumas by gaining the critical distance to distinguish the past, the present and the future and make sure in which state one is and what efforts he/she can make for the future. Working through is an articulatory practice where one is able to distinguish between past and present with a realization that one is living in the present and now with openings to the future. Finally, Lucy and Lurie are able to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage life in the present, to assume responsibility.

Coetzee shows how the protagonists in the novel though terribly traumatized act in accordance with the basic ethics of humanism. The protagonists Lucy and Lurie are raped and assaulted respectively by black Africans still they, especially Lucy show positive attitude towards blacks. Due to her ethical principles, she prioritizes 'other' before 'self' and herself takes the responsibility for whatever misfortunes happen to her. Lucy's, accepting the fact that I am responsible for the very faults of another, for his deeds and misdeeds is an authentic figure of responsibility which symbolically shows the realization of responsibility made by whites towards blacks. She takes the incident of three blacks raping her as her own fault and never makes up her mind to avenge the guilty and finally, forgives them which in Derrida's term is 'total forgiveness' as she forgives the unforgivable.

The ethical deed of Lucy's forgiveness of her criminals has great significance in the novel as it gives reader something to hope about the possibility of forgiveness to whites by blacks for the wrongs of the past done by whites. As forgiveness is not and should not be conditional, Lucy, forgiving her rapists is an exceptional ethical deed and it

addresses to somewhat the impossible. Lucy alone makes a decision to forgive her enemies which is pure forgiveness. Lucy forgives them because it was right in accordance with the principle of ethics and it was mostly important to lessen the degree of enmity between the whites and the blacks. However, Lurie fails to understand the reason behind Lucy forgiving the guilty as he makes no importance to realize the value of ethical deeds in problematic post-apartheid South Africa.

The positive attitude of newer generation whites like Lucy towards blacks gives something to hope that things will be better in new South Africa. Despite Lurie's advice to leave South Africa and refusal to stay, Lucy determines to settle in new South Africa. On the contrary, she shows her strong determination to give birth to a mixed race child and agrees to get married with a black man Petrus. Lucy's ethical act of 'total forgiveness' to her victimizers has built the possibility that blacks will also forgive whites for their crimes of past. Similarly, a student like Melanie protesting against rape and seduction is an optimistic sign that victims have started raising their voice against male oppression.

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